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## Katy ISD halts all library book purchases, directs incoming books to storage pending book reviews



Claire Goodman, Staff writer

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Katy ISD Superintendent Ken Gregorski, shown in this file photo from August 2022, listens to discussion about a proposed framework to evaluate books for the district's students during a school board meeting, at Katy ISD Educational Support Complex in Katy.

Jon Shapley, Houston Chronicle / Staff photographer

Katy ISD has frozen purchases of new library books and will place incoming books in storage, following a directive by the board of trustees.

At Monday's meeting, the school board instructed Superintendent Ken Gregorski to cease buying new books, and mandated that any books already purchased for the new school year be placed into storage until the board changes the current book policy or creates a committee for book evaluation.

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The only books exempt from the decision are those destined for the district's newest schools, which will open for the first time this year, in order for the schools to have a library.

Katy ISD has been mired in controversy over removing or limiting access to books at schools. Last year, the board adopted a policy requiring parents' permission for students to check out classroom library books. The district's three newest board members, elected in May, cited the removal of "sexually explicit" materials as top priorities during their campaigns.

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The agenda item was a discussion-only issue, meaning no vote was required, enabling the board to instruct Gregorski to freeze purchases of new books and store incoming books.

The discussion began when Katy ISD General Counsel Justin Graham broached House Bill 900 with the board, noting that the newly passed legislation, which aims to ban sexually explicit materials from school libraries, will become law April 1, 2024.

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In the interim, board President Victor Perez suggested that Katy ISD circumvent the need for removing books from the library by preventing them from entering libraries all together.

In response, Gregorski agreed to cease all book purchases and to move already purchased books into storage indefinitely until the board creates a new procedure for book evaluation.

“That can be done immediately, beginning tomorrow, that we just redirect those purchases to the warehouse ... and they will just sit in the warehouse until we figure this out, if that’s what the board would like me to do,” Gregorski said.

Some board members questioned the legality and practicality of the move.

“We’ve spent our taxpayer money on those resources,” trustee Rebecca Fox said, “and a lot of children like to read current and recent books.”

Fox also questioned whether the move was drastic, noting that the overall percentage of banned books in the district is very small. She also posited that elementary libraries be exempt from the action, as books for younger children have so far evaded controversy in the district.



Newly elected trustee Morgan Calhoun said she's seen books in elementary schools that "support sexually alternative lifestyles."

"There are elementary schools that have Pride sections in them ... so yes, elementary school, middle school, high school (books) – all of them," Calhoun said.

Perez said the board would likely add an agenda item to the next meeting that will allow the board to create a book review committee or implement an updated policy for book reviews.



Written By  
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Reach Claire on

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